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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 FRANKFURT 000808

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/AGS, EUR/PGI, DS/IP, DS/ITA, AND S/CT

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PTER KHLS KJUS PGOV ASEC GM

SUBJECT: Law Enforcement Copes with Challenges of Global Terror in Southwest Germany

REF: 07 Berlin 1767; 07 Berlin 1681

Classified By: CG Jo Ellen Powell for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The September 4 arrests of three terror suspects tied to the Islamic Jihad Union highlighted the prevalence of Islamic extremism and homegrown terrorism in Baden-Wuerttemberg, a large and conservative southern German state. All three suspects, two of whom are German converts, spent considerable time in extremist circles in Ulm, a mid-sized city, and much of the preparation for the foiled attacks took place in the state as well. State police officials have made combating Islamic terrorism a top priority, spending an immense amount of manpower and time on a small number of cases. They worry, however, that they cannot possibly track all suspects or overcome the technological and legal challenges posed by an ever-moving target.
End Summary.

The IJU Case: A Success for the B-W Police

¶2. (C) Officials at the Baden Wuerttemberg (B-W) State Office of Criminal Investigations told Pol Off and Regional Security Officer March 13 that the three men arrested for plotting terrorist attacks on September 4, 2007, Fritz Gelowicz, Daniel Martin Schneider and Adem Yilmaz, first came under B-W police surveillance in January, 2007 after an alert from the federal police (see reftels). The police effort to monitor the suspects tied to the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) involved close coordination between police in several states and the federal police. The B-W officials said that, in their state, over 130 officers worked on the case, an enormous use of manpower that would not be authorized for other types of cases such as organized crime. Judges also issued authorizations for phone and automobile surveillance on an expedited basis.

¶3. (C) Going forward, the trial must start within one year after the arrests, and the officials guessed it would take place at the federal court in Duesseldorf. Currently, investigators and prosecutors are sorting through the vast body of evidence, which consists mostly of captured hard-drives and taped surveillance. According to the police, the three suspects were wary of discussing their plans over the phone, but did so in their automobiles, which, while often rented, were nevertheless under surveillance. The police worried that, once this evidence became public at the trial, currently active terrorists would adjust their tactics. The suspects allegedly did not target any specific locations, but were looking at discos frequented by U.S. soldiers as well as U.S. facilities. The police said they had one taped conversation where the suspects said they

wanted to kill hundreds with each attack and "get the Americans and their whores."

Muslim Extremism in B-W: An Ongoing Challenge

¶4. (C) According to the police, they currently monitor 100-200 Islamic radicals in the state who may be involved in terrorist activities. The Islamists are based in four areas: 1. Ulm, home of a long-standing Islamist scene begun by hate preacher Yehia Yousef in the 1990s; 2. Boeblingen, an offshoot of the Ulm scene centered around the Sunnah mosque; 3. Stuttgart, the state capital and home to many Bosnian refugees who follow the Wahabi form of Islam; and 4. Offenburg, a small city close to the French border and home to many North African immigrants. The combined Muslim population in B-W is over 600,000 Muslims, 9,000 of whom are considered radically oriented.

¶5. (C) According to the police, the arrests and two earlier ones in Dortmund and Koblenz forced the police to change their strategy of tracking sleeper-cell terrorists from abroad in order to pay more attention to homegrown suspects such as Gelowicz and Schneider. These suspects present a greater challenge to law enforcement, as they offer less of a distinct profile. Police concentrate on individuals who have attended terrorist training overseas, which is still not a crime in Germany. Officials admitted they rely heavily on surveillance and have had little success penetrating radical groups with informants.

¶6. (C) While B-W police felt the legal and judicial system worked well in combating terrorism, they saw several areas for improvement. They would like to see the introduction of laws that allow for greater monitoring of online activity as well as preventative

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telephone surveillance. In B-W, the presence of the Free Democratic Party -- traditionally a strong defender of civil liberties -- in the government is currently preventing progress on these issues. The police are currently working harder to deport foreign students who abuse their status. They also work closely with educational institutions and Muslim communities, keeping an eye out for any emerging extremist groups.

¶7. (C) Comment: The IJU's recent claim that a German citizen, Cuneyt Ciftci, was responsible for the March 3 suicide bombing in Khost, Afghanistan that killed two U.S. soldiers highlights the threat posed by terrorists with links to Germany and underscores the need for continued vigilance on the part of law enforcement and security officials. Ciftci had lived in the neighboring state of Bavaria. B-W police see Islamic extremism as an ongoing challenge and to deal with it, law enforcement agencies are increasingly dependent on the legal system's ability to adjust to changes in terrorist tactics and technology. However, the cost in time, energy and resources spent by the police is immense and takes away from other cases. End Comment.

¶8. This cable was coordinated with Embassy Berlin.
POWELL